

The 5-Year Course of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States

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This article examines the 5-year incidence, prevalence, and recurrence of intimate partner violence (IPV) among White, Black, and Hispanic intact couples in the United States. A national multistage household probability sample of couples, age 18 years or older, was interviewed in 1995 with a response rate of 85%, and reinterviewed in 2000 with a response rate of 72%. Results indicate that the incidence and recurrence of IPV are higher for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites. Compared to Whites, Hispanics are 2.5 times more likely to initiate IPV between baseline and follow-up and Blacks are 3.7 times more likely to report IPV at baseline and follow-up. Couples reporting severe IPV in 1995 are more likely than others to report severe IPV at follow-up. The rate of recurrence for severe IPV among Black and Hispanic couples is 6 and 4 times higher, respectively, than the rate among Whites. The results suggest that Blacks and Hispanics may be more affected by IPV.

Keywords: *intimate partner violence; ethnic differences; general population survey; health disparities*

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a major public health problem in the United States. Results from the 1985 National Family Violence Resurvey indicated that about 17% of all U.S. couples experienced an episode of IPV in

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the previous year (Straus & Gelles, 1990). More recent analyses show that the rate of male-to-female partner violence (MFPV) and female-to-male partner violence (FMPV) among U.S. couples was 13.6% and 18.2%, respectively (Schafer, Caetano, & Clark, 1998). In addition, higher rates of IPV were found among certain ethnic groups (Kantor, 1993; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Smith, 1990). Cross-ethnic analyses of the first wave of data from this article indicated that the rate of MFPV was 23% for Black, 17% for Hispanic, and 12% for White couples whereas rates of FMPV were 30% for Black, 21% for Hispanic, and 16% for White couples (Caetano, Cunradi, Schafer, & Clark, 2000). Differences between Whites and Blacks remained after controlling for sociodemographic variables, attitudes toward IPV, impulsive personality, and violence in the family of origin.

The increased occurrence of IPV among ethnic minority groups vis-à-vis Whites has been explained in a variety of ways. Two important sets of ideas are represented by the subculture of violence theory and by the social-structural theory (see review by Gelles, 1985). The subculture of violence theory proposes that certain groups in society accept violence as a means of conflict resolution more than others. Such an acceptance, as the theory title indicates, is considered to be part of the culture of that group. The social-structural theory refutes this idea, proposing instead that IPV is associated not with the cultural characteristics of a group but with the societal structural conditions (e.g., poverty, undereducation, and high unemployment that characterize the life of members of a particular minority group). For instance, several studies have shown that socioeconomic status is an important variable to be considered when exploring the association between drinking and IPV. Straus and Smith (1990) and Kantor (1993) found that socioeconomic factors, age, and drinking explained differences in severe violence between Hispanics and Whites. However, differences between Blacks and Whites on severe husband-to-wife violence cannot be attributed to the effect of socioeconomic factors (Cazenave & Straus, 1990) or to the combined effect of socioeconomic factors and drinking (Kantor, Jasinski, & Aldarondo, 1993).

Previous longitudinal research with community samples indicates that the course of IPV in these samples is neither as severe nor as chronic as in institutional samples (Feld & Straus, 1995; Leonard & Senchak, 1993; O'Leary, Barling, Arias, & Rosenbaum, 1989; Quigley & Leonard, 1996). In O'Leary et al.'s (1989) sample, 49% of the men who reported aggression before marriage did not report aggression 18 months later. Quigley and Leonard (1996) reported a rate of 12-month "desistance" of aggression in their sample of newlyweds of 23.9%. In a study with a national general population sample, Feld and Straus (1995) found that the 12-month rate of desistance of physical assaults by husbands who reported one to two severe assaults and three or

more was 58% and 33%, respectively. Finally, analyzing the 1988-2003 National Survey of Families and Households, Jasinski (2001) reported an overall rate of cessation of male aggression of 69% over 5 years. Common to all these previous longitudinal analyses is that those who engaged in severe violence are more likely than those who engaged in moderate violence to report continued violence at follow-up.

With this previous research in mind, this article has three specific objectives. The first is to examine the prevalence, incidence, and recurrence of IPV among White, Black, and Hispanic couples between 1995 and 2000. Incidence is the proportion of couples who reported IPV in 2000 but not in 1995 of all of those who did not report IPV in 1995. Recurrence is the proportion of couples who reported IPV in 1995 and 2000 of all of those who reported IPV in 1995. The second objective is to examine the course of IPV by assessing change in severity of IPV, from no violence to moderate or severe IPV between 1995 and 2000. Finally, the article examines the predictors for remission, recurrence, and incidence of IPV. Previous results indicate that ethnic minorities, especially Blacks, have higher prevalence rates of IPV than Whites; however, these results also indicate that Blacks have a higher remission rate than Whites (Jasinski, 2001). This suggests that the course of IPV among Blacks is shorter, with more Blacks perpetrating IPV than Whites and Hispanics (higher prevalence and incidence) but also remitting earlier. Therefore, it is expected that IPV remission will be higher among Blacks than Whites and Hispanics whereas IPV prevalence and incidence will be higher among Blacks than among Hispanics and Whites.

Overall, theoretical guidance for the analysis is taken from the socio-structural or economic theory of violence as described by Gelles (1985), which suggests that factors such as racial discrimination, poverty, and unemployment lead to stressful life conditions and violence. Two other important predictors of violence are drinking and alcohol problems. Studies based on other community samples have shown a positive association between alcohol consumption, drinking problems, and IPV (Amaro, Fried, Cabral, & Zuckerman, 1990; Caetano, Cunradi, et al., 2000; Cunradi, Caetano, Clark, & Schafer, 1999; Leonard & Quigley, 1999; Leonard & Senchak, 1993). Other important predictors are childhood physical abuse and observation of parental IPV or threat of parental IPV during childhood (Caetano, Cunradi, et al., 2000). The basis for inclusion of these predictors is not only empirical, it has been found to predict IPV in previous research, but also theoretical. Based on social learning theory (Bandura, 1971), conflict resolution through violence in adult life can result from learned models of behavior during childhood.

METHOD

Sample and Follow-Up Rates

At the time of the first interview (1995), participants in the current study constituted a multistage random probability sample representative of married and cohabiting couples in 48 contiguous United States. All couples age 18 years and older living in randomly selected households were eligible to participate. This process identified 1,925 couples, of which 1,635 couples completed the interview for a response rate of 85%. Included in the sample were oversamples of Black and Hispanic couples. In 2000, the 1,635 couples previously interviewed were contacted again to participate in the 5-year follow-up. At follow-up, both members of 15 couples were either dead or incapacitated, leaving 1,620 couples ($1,635 - 15$) to be reinterviewed.

Interviews were successfully completed with 1,392 couples, or 72% of the 1,925 couples from the 1995 original eligible sample (or 85% of the couples actually interviewed in 1995). Among these couples, 1,025 were intact and homogeneous regarding White, Black, or Hispanic ethnicity (406 White, 232 Black, and 387 Hispanic). The current analysis is limited to these couples. They are 71% of all the White, Black, and Hispanic couples interviewed in 1995, during the baseline survey.

Data Collection

Participants signed a written informed consent before being interviewed. In 1995 and 2000, face-to-face interviews were conducted in respondents' homes with standardized questionnaires. Interviews were conducted by trained interviewers, who were also supervised during all fieldwork. All questionnaires were checked for completeness by fieldwork supervisors. Members of the couple were always interviewed independently. Interviews in which this independence appeared to be compromised were discarded ($n = 20$).

Nonresponse Analysis

This is described in Caetano, Ramisetty-Mikler, and McGrath (2003). Briefly, in regard to violence-related variables, women who reported being victimized by violence during their childhood were less likely to be among nonrespondents compared to those who were not victimized.

Measurements

IPV

This was based on the Conflict Tactics Scale, Form R (Straus, 1990), which covers the following items (12 months): threw something; pushed, grabbed, or shoved; slapped; kicked, bit, or hit; hit or tried to hit with something; beat up; choked; burned or scalded; forced sex; threatened with a knife or gun; used a knife or gun. Violence was considered as present when at least one of the partners reported a violent incident. Level of violence (moderate vs. severe) was operationalized in accord with previously published reports (Forjuoh, Coben, & Gondolf, 1998; Leonard & Quigley, 1999; Straus, 1995). Moderate violence consisted of at least one of the following: threw something at partner; pushed, shoved, or grabbed; slapped. Severe violence was defined by any other items in the scale.

Alcohol Consumption

Quantity and frequency of drinking (wine, beer, and liquor) during the 12-month period prior to the survey were combined to estimate the average number of drinks of alcohol consumed weekly. A *drink* was defined as 1 ounce of liquor, 4 ounces of wine, or 12 ounces of beer, each of which contains approximately 12 grams of absolute alcohol. See Dawson and Room (2000) and Room (2000) for a discussion of the history of these survey measures.

Alcohol Problems

These covered 14 problem areas in the 12 months prior to the survey: salience of drinking, impaired control, withdrawal symptoms, drinking to relieve withdrawal, tolerance, binge drinking, belligerence, accidents, health-related problems, work-related problems, financial problems, problems with the police, and problems with persons other than the spouse. Respondents were divided into those who reported any problem in the past 12 months and those who did not report problems. See Dawson and Room (2000) and Gmel, Rehm, Room, and Greenfield (2000) for a discussion of properties of these problem measures.

*Frequency of Five or More
Alcoholic Drinks on Occasion*

Information on quantity and frequency of drinking (wine, beer, and liquor) was combined to estimate the frequency of consuming five or more drinks on a single occasion. Three frequency groups were formed for analysis: less than once a month, once a month or more, and not in past year or abstainers.

Psychosocial

Childhood physical abuse. Respondents' experience of any of the following by their parent or caregiver during childhood or adolescence: hit with something; beaten up; choked, burned, or scalded; threatened with a knife or gun; had a knife or gun used against them. Respondents were divided into categories: those who had had no such experiences, those who had been hit with something, and those who had experienced more severe forms of violence (burned or scalded; threatened with a knife or gun; hurt with a knife or gun).

Childhood exposure to parental (partner) violence. Respondents were asked whether during their childhood or adolescence they had observed their parents or the persons who raised them threaten one another with physical violence or actually be physically violent with one another. Respondents were divided into two groups: those who observed physical violence or threat of violence and those who never observed violence or threat of violence.

Approval of marital aggression. Each respondent was asked to rate his or her approval on a 4-point Likert-type scale to the following behaviors: (a) a husband is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward his wife; (b) a wife is acting in a verbally aggressive or verbally abusive way toward her husband; (c) a husband is behaving in a physically violent way to his wife; (d) a wife is behaving in a physically violent way to her husband. Responses to these four items were dichotomized, and the reference group constituted couples in which both members indicated that they always disapproved of the husband's or wife's being verbally or physically aggressive.

Sociodemographic

Ethnic identification. Respondents who identified themselves as Black of Hispanic origin (Latino, Mexican, Central or South American, or any other Hispanic origin) and White of Hispanic origin (Latino, Mexican, Central, or South American, or any other Hispanic origin) were classified as Hispanic. Respondents who selected the category Black, not of Hispanic origin, were classified as Black. Respondents who selected White, not of Hispanic origin, were classified as White.

Couple mean age. The age of respondents was measured continuously in years from which the mean age of the couple was derived.

Income. Respondents were asked to identify the category into which their total 1994 pretax household income fell: (a) US\$4,000 or less; (b) \$4,001 to \$6,000; (c) \$6,001 to \$8,000; (d) \$8,001 to \$10,000; (e) \$10,001 to \$15,000; (f) \$15,001 to \$20,000; (g) \$20,001 to \$30,000; (h) \$30,001 to \$40,000; (i) \$40,001 to \$60,000; (j) \$60,001 to 80,000; (k) \$80,001 to \$100,000; and (l) more than \$100,000. A representative value for each couple was then set at the midpoint of their stated category, except for those reporting incomes greater than \$100,000, which was set at \$100,000. Household income was then analyzed as a continuous variable.

Marital status. Couples were classified as either cohabiting or married (reference group).

Employment. Respondents were categorized into two employment categories: unemployed (unemployed or laid off and looking for work, unemployed and not looking for work, never worked for pay), retired or other (disabled, in school, volunteer, in job training program); and employed (work full-time, work part-time, have a job but not at work because of temporary illness, self-employed), which was the reference group.

Data Analysis

All analyses used the Software for Survey Data Analysis (SUDAAN) statistical package (Research Triangle Institute, 1996). Analyses were con-

ducted on data weighted to correct for probability of selection into the sample, nonresponse rates, and to adjust the sample to known Census-based population distributions.

RESULTS

Sociodemographic Characteristics Across Ethnic Groups

In 1995, the midpoint for couples' income was \$47,919 for Whites, \$33,680 for Blacks, and \$24,100 for Hispanics. In 2000, couples reported higher incomes, with midpoint increases of about \$4,000 for Whites, \$9,000 for Blacks, and \$7,000 for Hispanics. The mean age for males in 1995 was 49.1 for Whites, 45.2 for Blacks, and 41.7 for Hispanics. The mean age for females was about 3 years younger than males across all ethnic groups. Unemployment rates for males in 1995 were 2% for Whites, 4% for Blacks, and 8% for Hispanics. Regarding marital status, in 1995 93% of the Whites, 86% of the Blacks, and 87% of the Hispanics were married. In 1995, the average length of relationship was 21.3 years for Whites, 16.6 years for Blacks, and 16 years for Hispanics.

Prevalence, Incidence and Recurrence of IPV

In 1995 and 2000, the prevalence of IPV was higher among Blacks and Hispanics than Whites (Table 1) (1995 $\chi^2 = 10.8$, $df = 2$, $p < .01$; 2000 $\chi^2 = 24.5$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Also, in 2000, Whites, but not Blacks or Hispanics, had a lower prevalence rate than in 1995. The incidence rate was about 2 times higher for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites (χ^2 Whites \times Blacks \times Hispanics = 10.6, $df = 2$, $p < .01$). Finally, IPV recurrence rates were higher among Blacks and Hispanics than among Whites; however, the difference between Blacks and Whites is not statistically significant (χ^2 Whites \times Hispanics = 5.2, $df = 1$, $p < .05$; χ^2 Whites \times Blacks = 2.1, $df = 1$, $p = ns$).

Changes in IPV Severity Status Between 1995 and 2000

Table 2 shows 2000 IPV status by 1995 IPV status. So, for instance, looking at the first column of Table 2a (Whites), 94% of the couples who did not report IPV in 1995 did not report IPV in 2000. A total of 5% reported moderate violence in 2000, and only 1% went from nonviolent in 1995 to severe violence in 2000. The proportion of couples who decreased their level of violence between 1995 and 2000 (proportions above the diagonals in Table 2) is

TABLE 1: Prevalence, Incidence, and Recurrence of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States: 1995 to 2000

	<i>Whites</i>			<i>Blacks</i>			<i>Hispanics</i>		
	<i>No.</i> ^a	%	SE	<i>No.</i> ^a	%	SE	<i>No.</i> ^a	%	SE
Prevalence 1995 ^b	406	17	4.1	232	27	4.4	387	26	5.2
Prevalence 2000 ^c	375	11	3.8	203	25	5.2	362	25	6.6
Incidence ^d	311	6	5.3	142	14	7.3	268	14	9.0
Recurrence ^e	64	37	4.8	61	52	6.0	94	58	6.9

a. Numbers are unweighted denominators for rates.

b. χ^2 Whites \times Blacks \times Hispanics = 10.8, $df = 2$, $p < .01$.

c. χ^2 Whites \times Blacks \times Hispanics = 24.5, $df = 2$, $p < .001$.

d. χ^2 Whites \times Blacks \times Hispanics = 10.6, $df = 2$, $p < .01$.

e. χ^2 Whites \times Hispanics = 5.2, $df = 1$, $p < .05$; χ^2 Whites \times Blacks = 2.1, $df = 1$, $p = ns$.

larger than the proportion increasing their level of violence (below diagonal), irrespective of ethnicity. Thus, the overall tendency of IPV in the community is to decrease in severity. However, this tendency is affected by the initial severity level in 1995. So, across all ethnic groups, couples who did not report IPV in 1995 rarely reported IPV in 2000. Of the couples reporting moderate IPV in 1995, about two thirds of the Whites and a little more than one half of the Blacks and Hispanics did not report any IPV in 2000 (i.e., remit), and about one third reported moderate IPV, again, across all ethnic groups. About 4% of Hispanic couples, about 8% of White couples, and 11% of Black couples progressed into severe IPV.

In contrast, with the course of IPV among couples who reported no violence or moderate violence in 1995, the characteristic course for couples who reported severe IPV in 1995 varies somewhat across Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. Proportions for White couples reporting severe IPV in 1995 could not be estimated because of the small sample size of couples in this group (third column, Table 2a). Among Black and Hispanic couples, about one third of the couples who reported severe IPV in 1995 did not report any IPV in 2000. Consequently, the majority of Black and Hispanic couples who reported severe violence in 1995 remained violent, reporting either moderate or severe IPV in 2000. About one third of the Black couples and one fourth of the Hispanic couples who reported severe IPV in 1995 reported severe IPV at follow-up in 2000. Thus, the rate of recurrence for severe IPV among Black and Hispanic couples was 6 and 4 times higher, respectively, than the rate among Whites.

TABLE 2: 2000 Status of Intimate Partner Violence by 1995 Status Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples in the United States: 1995 to 2000 (in percentages)

2a: White Couples

2000 Status	1995 Status		
	No Violence (n = 311)	Moderate (n = 47)	Severe ^a (n = 17)
No violence	94	66	[8] ^b
Moderate	5	26	[8]
Severe ^a	1	8	[1]

2b: Black Couples

2000 Status	1995 Status		
	No Violence (n = 140)	Moderate (n = 26)	Severe ^a (n = 35)
No violence	87	59	39
Moderate	12	30	27
Severe ^a	1	11	34

2c: Hispanic Couples

2000 Status	1995 Status		
	No Violence (n = 268)	Moderate (n = 43)	Severe ^a (n = 51)
No violence	86	58	28
Moderate	11	38	49
Severe ^a	2	4	23

a. χ^2 Whites \times Blacks \times Hispanics (Moderate/No IPV \times Severe) = 5.8, $df = 2$, $p = .056$.

b. Numbers in brackets are unweighted cell frequencies.

Predictors of Incidence, Recurrence, and Remission of IPV

This analysis uses the MULTLOG PROC of SUDAAN (Research Triangle Institute, 1996) to implement multivariate multinomial logit models to examine the predictors of incidence, remission, and recurrence of IPV. The categorical dependent variable has four groups: No IPV in 1995 and 2000, IPV in 2000 but not in 1995 (i.e., incidence group), IPV in 1995 but not in 2000 (i.e., remission group), and IPV in 1995 and 2000 (i.e., recurrence group). Results for the recurrence and incidence group use the no-violence group as reference. Results for the remission group use the recurrence group as reference. The significant predictors can be seen in Table 3.

Results show that the predictors of recurrence, remission, and incidence are different. Considering only those odds ratios that are statistically significant, recurrence is more common among younger couples, Black couples, couples in which the male is unemployed, couples in which the female drinks five or more drinks per occasion less than once a month, and couples in which the male or the female experienced severe childhood physical abuse. Remission of IPV is more likely among older couples and among couples in which the male or the female observed a threat or act of parental violence during childhood. Remission is less likely among Black couples. Finally, the initiation of IPV (i.e., incidence) is more likely among Hispanic couples and among couples in which the man observed parental violence or the threat of violence. Initiation of violence is less likely among older couples and couples in which women report alcohol problems.

DISCUSSION

Prevalence, Incidence, Recurrence, and Remission of IPV

The results show considerable stability of nonaggression among couples. Most couples in any of the three ethnic groups have conflict resolution tactics that would appear to be healthy and do not include violence. The results also show a decrease in prevalence from 1995 to 2000 for Whites and Blacks but not for Hispanics. Furthermore, partially consistent with the proposed hypothesis, prevalence and incidence rates are higher among Blacks and Hispanics than among Whites. The decline in prevalence for Whites and Blacks is not unexpected because the sample aged 5 years, and older age is negatively correlated with IPV perhaps because of an increased conformity with society's mores or changes in the ways in which couples address conflict resolution (Caetano, Cunradi, et al., 2000; Cunradi, Caetano, Clark, & Schafer, 2000; Suitor, Pillemer, & Straus, 1995). Moreover, the analyses were restricted to couples who remained together at follow-up. This is important to consider because rates of IPV may be lower among intact couples than among couples who broke up. Previous studies have indicated that IPV is associated with relationship instability (DeMaris, 2001; Rogge & Bradbury, 1999) and marital dissatisfaction along with increased actions aimed at terminating relationships (Heyman, O'Leary, & Jouriles, 1995; Katz, Arias, Beach, Brody, & Roman, 1995). For instance, Jacobson, Gottman, Bortner, Berns, and Shortt (1996) and Gortner, Berns, Jacobson, and Gottman (1997) reported a 38% rate of divorce during 2 years in a sample of violent couples, which increased to 50% at a 5-year follow-up.

TABLE 3: Odds Ratios (OR) and 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) From Multivariate Multinomial Logit Model of Intimate Partner Violence Among White, Black, and Hispanic Couples: 1995 to 2000

	Recurrence		Remission		Incidence	
	OR	CI	OR	CI	OR	CI
Couple mean age	.9**	.8, .9	1.1**	1.0, 1.2	.9**	.9, .96
Cohabiting (reference: married)	1.0	.4, 2.4	1.4	.3, 5.8	2.2	.6, 8.0
Black (reference: White)	3.7**	1.6, 8.8	.3*	.1, .9	2.2	.8, 6.1
Hispanic (reference: White)	2.0	.9, 4.5	.5	.2, 1.3	2.5*	1.0, 6.3
Male employment (reference: employed)	3.7**	1.6, 8.7	.3	.1, 1.5	1.0	.4, 2.5
Female employment (reference: employed)	.9	.5, 1.9	1.4	.6, 3.3	1.5	.8, 2.8
Male alcohol problems (past 12 months) (reference: no alcohol problems)	1.8	.6, 5.9	.6	.2, 2.1	1.2	.2, 5.4
Female alcohol problems (past 12 months) (reference: no alcohol problems)	1.7	.6, 5.2	.9	.2, 4.6	.1*	.01, .6
Male: five or more drinks (reference: not in past year)	.6	.2, 2.4	3.0	.8, 11.6	.5	.2, 1.5
Less than once a month	1.1	.2, 5.4	1.4	.3, 7.5	1.4	.4, 4.9
Female: five or more drinks (reference: not in past year)	3.8*	1.3, 10.6	.3	.1, 1.3	1.5	.3, 7.7
Less than once a month	.7	.1, 5.2	1.9	.1, 23.6	1.5	.1, 29.7
Male volume of alcohol per week (per five standard drinks)	1.1	.9, 1.2	.9	.7, 1.0	1.1*	1.0, 1.2
Female volume of alcohol per week (per five standard drinks)	1.1	.9, 1.3	1.0	.9, 1.2	.5	-.4, 1.3
Male: Observed parental threat or act (reference: no) Yes	1.0	.4, 2.3	3.5*	1.2, 10.0	4.1**	1.8, 9.0
Female observed parental threat or act (reference: no) Yes	1.7	.8, 3.6	2.5*	1.1, 5.9	1.0	.5, 2.1
Male childhood physical abuse (reference: No child abuse) Severe	5.3**	1.6, 17.3	.3	.1, 1.4	.5	.1, 1.6
Hit	2.5	.9, 6.8	.7	.2, 2.4	2.0	.8, 5.3
Female childhood physical abuse (reference: no child abuse) Severe	4.3*	1.3, 14.2	.3	.1, 1.2	3.8	.7, 20.3
Hit	.9	.4, 2.1	1.9	.8, 4.6	1.5	.7, 3.4
Couple approval of marital aggression (reference: no approval)	1.0	.4, 2.7	1.5	.5, 4.6	.4	.1, 1.2

NOTE: Controlled for household income.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

The drop in prevalence from 1995 to 2000 is lower among Hispanics than among Whites and Blacks. This is a result of the higher incidence and higher recurrence of IPV among Hispanics compared to Whites. However, the smaller drop in prevalence among Hispanics and the higher recurrence may not actually reflect a higher rate of IPV among Hispanic couples. This may be an artifact given that the analysis is based on intact couples only and that Hispanic couples seem to be less likely to divorce or separate than Whites and Blacks are, even in the presence of partner violence. For instance, a previous analysis of this data set showed that Hispanics have the lowest separation rate (12.8%) among couples who reported IPV at baseline, compared to Black (32.4%) and White (22%) couples (Ramisetty-Mikler & Caetano, 2005). The multivariate analysis indicates that Hispanics are about 2½ times more likely than Whites to initiate IPV between 1995 and 2000, and about 2 times more likely to report IPV in 1995 and 2000, although this latter finding is not statistically significant. The drop in prevalence among Hispanics also suggests that the relationship between IPV and age is different for Hispanics than it is for Whites and Blacks: Older age would be less protective against IPV among Hispanics than among Whites and Blacks (Caetano, Schafer, Clark, Cunradi, & Raspberry, 2000; Cunradi et al., 2000; Suitor et al., 1995).

Predictors of Recurrence, Remission, and Incidence

The multinomial analysis indicates that for Hispanic men, incidence is closely related to exposure to parental violence during childhood. Children who observe parental violence are more likely to develop psychopathology, aggressive behaviors, and social problems than nonexposed children (Holden, 1998; Kashani & Allan, 1998). More recently, childhood exposure to parental violence and childhood physical abuse have been identified as risk factors that often lead to alcohol abuse and alcohol-related problems (Holden, 1998; Ireland & Widom, 1994; Miller, Downs, & Testa, 1993; Sternberg et al., 1993). The multinomial analysis also indicates that a strong predictor of IPV recurrence is unemployment among males. Unemployment usually leads to financial problems, which can give rise to stressful conditions within the relationship and consequently IPV. This may be especially true of the IPV observed in general population samples, which is mostly moderate IPV and as such may have a greater association with contextual conditions such as unemployment than with personality problems (e.g., anti-social personality) and drug addiction (Archer, 2000; Johnson, 1995; O'Leary, 2000).

Together with Hispanics, Blacks are at a disadvantage regarding the course of IPV in relation to Whites. The multivariate analysis indicates that

Blacks are about 3 times more likely to report IPV in 1995 and 2000 than to report no IPV in either year; the finding for Hispanics is in the same direction but does not reach statistical significance. This finding indicating a higher recurrence of IPV among Blacks is in contradiction to the results reported by Jasinski (2001) and is not consistent with the hypothesis proposed in this article. There are a number of potential explanations for the difference in these findings. Jasinski's study analyzed MFPV only while the current results examine IPV independent of whether it was perpetrated by the male or the female in the dyad. Jasinski's definition of violence was limited to "hitting, shoving or throwing things." The narrower the definition the more likely it is that behavior reported at a point in time will not be reported again at a second point in time. Finally, higher rate of IPV recurrence is in accordance with longitudinal findings for the course of other problem behaviors among Blacks, such as frequent heavy drinking and drinking problems. These previous longitudinal findings show a higher recurrence rate for these behaviors among Blacks than Whites (Caetano & Kaskutas, 1995, 1996).

Focusing on predictors that have a statistically significant association with the outcomes of interest and also have an odds ratio equal to 2 or higher may help in identifying a coherent set of factors of importance for developing prevention interventions. If this is done, the predictors with the strongest association with recurrence of IPV are minority ethnicity (Black), male unemployment, female drinking of five or more drinks on occasion, and male and female history of childhood abuse. All of these are predictors that confirm the importance of sociostructural and social learning approaches to understanding IPV. Predictors related to incidence of IPV are Hispanic ethnicity and male history of violence between parents. These factors show some overlap with those associated with recurrence of IPV, being also supportive of sociostructural and social learning theory. Only two variables in the model were strongly related to remission, male and female history of parental violence. These results are more difficult to understand.

Similar to previous studies in general population samples, the results show that the most common course of IPV in these samples is remission. However, the likelihood of remission varies with the severity of violence. Couples initially reporting severe violence are more likely to remain violent over time than couples reporting moderate violence. This association between severity and recurrence is not surprising, and it characterizes the course of a variety of other behaviors and conditions ranging from alcohol problems and dependence (Fillmore, 1987a, 1987b; Fillmore & Midanik, 1984) to criminal behavior (Langan & Levin, 2002). It is probable that couples who resort to severe violence at some point in time have fewer coping skills to deal with conflicts and, as such, are more easily caught in a perpetu-

ating cycle of violence. It is also possible that severe violence is strongly associated with other relatively stable problem behaviors such as alcohol or drug dependence or an impulsive or antisocial personality, both of which may contribute to the maintenance of IPV over time.

Study Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths. It collected information on IPV from both partners, which enhances the probability of identification of spousal violence (Stets & Straus, 1990; Szinovacz & Egley, 1995). Bilingual interviews were conducted, and oversampling of Blacks and Hispanics allowed for ethnic group-specific analyses. The longitudinal design allows for the assessment of incidence, recurrence of violence, and change in severity of violence from moderate to severe and vice versa. However, this design also had limitations. Data collection took place at two points in time. In each of these points data were collected for the past 12 months and as a result, life course or information pertaining to the entire 5-year interval between baseline and follow-up are not available. Another limitation of the current study is 15% of the eligible couples at baseline refused to participate. At follow-up, the proportion of originally eligible couples not interviewed was 28%. Selection biases may be present if in 1995 or 2000 nonparticipating couples were more likely to have experienced IPV. In addition, the analyses did not consider the frequency of assaults and psychological violence and did not differentiate couples with reciprocal violence from those where the violence was perpetrated by males or females only. Analyses of data with a focus on whether IPV had been perpetrated by the man or the woman in the dyad would also have been more informative. However, if data are analyzed by gender and by ethnic group, denominators for the rates (e.g., incidence, recurrence) become small. Finally, analysis of IPV based on a sample of intact couples may underestimate this violence in the general population because couples who separated because of IPV are not included in the analysis. Limitations of the CTS, the scale used to assess IPV, have also been discussed in the literature. These include lack of assessment of the context and of the consequences of violent acts committed by husbands and wives (Straus, 1990, 1995).

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